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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01
DHA-02 IO-13 /084 W
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O P 010754Z JUN 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1605
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL OPORTO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4283

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, PINT, IS, PO
SUBJ: GOP TAKES HEAT ON ISRAEL RELATIONS

REF: (A) LISBON 3797 (DTG 130837Z MAY 77), (B) TEL AVIV 3404
(DTG 131229Z MAY 77)(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE GOP DECISION TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL SPARKED A CHORUS OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN OPPOSITION. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE GOP HAS STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO BACK DOWN. END SUMMARY.

1. ARAB PRESSURES: THE BOYCOTT BY THE ARAB AMBASSADORS OF JUAN CARLOS'S DINNER IN HONOR OF PRESIDENT EANES POINTS UP THE CONTINUED PRESSURES AGAINST THE GOP TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL (REFTELS). SOCIALIST PARTY SOURCES TELL US THAT PRACTICALLY EVERY MEMBER OF THE

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GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN BUTTONHOLED DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS BY RESIDENT ARAB DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES. THE MESSAGE IS ALWAYS THE SAME:

-- NORMALIZATION IS NOT TIMELY BECAUSE OF THE DELICATE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

-- NORMALIZATION, ABSENT A SOLUTION TO REFUGEE AND BOUNDARY QUESTIONS, WOULD BE AN UNFRIENDLY ACT.

2. OPPOSITION FROM THE LEFT: THE COMMUNISTS AND THEIR MINIONS MAINTAIN A STEADY DRUMBEAT OF OPPOSITION TO CLOSER TIES TO ISRAEL. THERE IS OPPOSITION WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY AS WELL. DISSIDENT PS LEFT-WINGERS MAKE NO SECRET OF THEIR PRO-ARAB SENTIMENTS. FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER LOPES CARDOSO AND HIS "CULTURAL ASSOCIATION" PROVIDE A READY RALLYING POINT FOR THOSE WITHIN THE PARTY LOOKING FOR ANOTHER ISSUE WITH WHICH TO BEAT THE PS LEADERSHIP OVER THE HEAD. THE UPCOMING ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE WILL PROVIDE YET ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ARABS TO RALLY SUPPORT AMONG THE PORTUGUESE LEFT.

3. AND THE RIGHT: THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION HAS THUS FAR NOT TAKEN A STRONG STAND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER ON THE NORMALIZATION ISSUE. BUT THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL AT THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPENSE IS THERE. THE HEADLINE ACCOMPANYING "EXPRESSO" EDITOR AND PSD POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEMBER FRANCISCO BALSEMAO'S MAY 28 ARTICLE ON THE ARAB LEAGUE MADE THAT APPARENT. THE HEADLINE QUOTED SECRETARY-GENERAL MAHMOUD RIAD: "I ONLY KNOW THAT THE PREVIOUS REGIME NEVER GAVE IN TO PRESSURES." RIAD'S COMMENTS
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UNDERSCORED THE POINT: IF THE GOP WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE ITS POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL IT MUST BE BECAUSE OF OUTSIDE (READ US) PRESSURES.

4. GOP POSITION: THE GOP HAS STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO BACK DOWN FROM ITS POSITION THAT THE DECISION IS "IRREVOCABLE."

5. COMMENT: OPPONENTS OF DECISION CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TO GET GOP TO REVERSE ITSELF. FOR EXAMPLE, RUMORS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATED IN LISBON, PROBABLY DELIBERATELY, THAT PORTUGAL HAS JEOPARDIZED LARGE LOANS FROM THE ARAB OIL STATES. THE SO-CALLED "THIRD WORLD" LEFTISTS IN PORTUGAL HAVE BEEN ACTIVE PROPONENTS OF THE CONCEPT THAT ARAB MONEY IS READILY AVAILABLE IF PORTUGAL ONLY TAKES THE RIGHT POSITION ON ISRAEL.
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